

Elliott Coues: Naturalist and Frontier Historian

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Book Reviews

dians. These and other sources add substance to a work that contributes much to the understanding to America's frontier experience and urban history.

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LAWRENCE H. LARSEN

Elliott Coues: Naturalist and Frontier Historian, by Paul Russell Cutright and Michael J. Brodhead. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981. pp. xv, 509. Maps, illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$28.50.

When Elliott Coues died on Christmas Day, 1899, probably few people could say that they truly admired or understood the man, yet none could deny that he was intelligent and talented—and productive. Although trained as a physician, Coues' abiding interest had been ornithology, a realm in which he distinguished himself. But he was more than a leading expert on birds. He also made his mark as a mammalogist and as an historian, and, in establishing his scientific and literary reputation, he produced an almost overwhelming number of publications, ranging, for example, from his highly regarded *Key to North American Birds* to *Fur-Bearing Animals* to his well-known edited work *History of the Expedition under the Command of Lewis and Clark*. And his accomplishments were duly recognized. He was elected to membership in over thirty learned societies, including the American Philosophical Society, the National Academy of Sciences (At age thirty-four, he became the Academy's youngest member.), and the American Ornithologists' Union, which he helped to found.

Unlike many of his peers, however, Coues was far from being a reclusive intellectual. On the contrary, his life was filled with diverse activities such as serving for several years as an army surgeon on the frontier, working at the Smithsonian Institution, teaching anatomy at the National Medical College, and even forming the Gnostic Theosophical Society of Washington. In all, he was an active, often contentious, sometimes strange, and generally intriguing man. Now, thanks to Paul Russell Cutright and Michael J. Brodhead, a full scale biography of Coues is available.

Cutright and Brodhead no doubt faced a tremendous task when they began this study. Indeed, they might well have chosen to construct only an intellectual portrait of Coues. Fortunately, they shouldered a harder burden: They strove to produce a picture of Coues the man as well as Coues the scholar. At the same time, they did not eschew presenting protracted appraisals of Coues' scientific

Book Reviews

and scholarly work. What emerges from their endeavors, then, is an interesting composite of information, analysis, and particulars associated with the life of Elliot Coues through which both the brilliant and petty sides of Coues come to light, as do his satisfying and brooding moments. Thus the reader can gain not only an appreciation for Coues' achievements but also a view of Coues the chain smoker of cigarettes who had an eye for the ladies and who finally found happiness in his private life in his third marriage.

In any biography, of course, there will be gaps. No biographers can ever discover or discuss every detail in their subjects' lives, nor can they hope to please every critic. Cutright and Brodhead, moreover, made their undertaking doubly hard, for their purpose was "to make more available to the general reader and the professional scientist and historian alike the life story of this colorful and influential American scientist" (p. xi). Nonetheless, drawing on a wealth of sources and their personal expertise, they essentially met their goal. They have produced a good study for which they should be commended.

MARSHALLTOWN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

THOMAS BURNELL COLBERT

Victims: A True Story of the Civil War, by Phillip Shaw Paludan. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981. Bibliographical references, appendix, index. \$11.95.

Civil war is a particularly nasty version of a nasty business, but we tend to think of the American Civil War in romantic terms (phrases such as the "lost cause" come to mind). Dr. Paludan has injected a note of sober realism into the literature of the Civil War.

This book describes an atrocity that occurred in the North Carolina mountains in 1863. Thirteen supposed Union guerillas were shot by Confederate soldiers without benefit of a trial or civil due process. It was a small incident, not affecting the outcome of the war. However, the author uses the incident as a vehicle for probing the nature of atrocity in general. *Victims* probably would not have been written before Vietnam. In fact, the author draws analogies between Vietnam and the incident chronicled in this book.

Dr. Paludan is a professor of history at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. He has also held a concurrent position as a fellow of the Harvard Law School. This blend of expertise has served him well in writing *Victims*. He explains clearly what an atrocity is under international law and why the killings were considered so, even by Confederate authorities.

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